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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [ABLD](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIM JONG-PIL'S LAST
POLITICAL STAND: HELP THE GNP WIN IN 2007

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Former Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil told the Ambassador on November 16 that U.S.-ROK relations were paramount and that the administration had to change in 2007. Kim said he would support the GNP candidate, whoever that may be, provided that he/she agreed to "sweep out the debris" of the Roh administration and take a reasonable but hard line toward North Korea. Kim, 80 years old, said this would be his last public service to the country. END SUMMARY.

Korea's debt to the U.S.

12. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on November 16, Kim Jong-pil spoke at length about the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance and stressed that none of the prosperity Koreans enjoyed today would have been possible without U.S. assistance. Even the trees on Namsan Mountain in central Seoul were there only because of U.S. assistance. Kim was highly critical of President Roh, enumerating his faults and shortcomings. Still, Kim said he was confident that the five-year period of the Roh administration would simply be a "comma" in the continued progress of Korea. With a Grand National Party (GNP) president in power starting in February 2008, U.S.-ROK relations would improve. To assure a GNP president, Kim would influence the votes of Chungcheong, his hometown province. In addition to reaffirming strong relations with the U.S., the next ROK president should work to improve relations with Japan and be wise in relations with China, Kim said.

North Korea

13. (C) Turning to North Korean issues, Kim said that, if necessary, the United States should consider using force to seek change. North Korea was like a whiny child; if not scolded strongly, it would not change its ways. The Six Party Talks would not lead to anything but buying time for Kim Jong-il to further develop his nuclear program, Kim noted. The Ambassador said that after North Korea's October 9 nuclear test, it was necessary to be firm toward North Korea. The United States was working with China and all of North Korea's neighbors to forge a unified approach. This was essential if the international community was to succeed in denuclearizing North Korea, the Ambassador said.

2007 Presidential Elections

¶4. (C) Kim said he would support the GNP in the presidential election next year. The GNP candidate must be ready to sweep out the debris of the Roh government; work hard to improve U.S.-ROK relations; be prepared to threaten North Korea with force; and, finally, lift the living standards of South Koreans. Historically, his home Chungcheong Province had provided the swing votes, and 2007 would be the same, he said. There would be three to four candidates for president in 2007, but the GNP candidate was the only real option. Kim said that the Uri Party would remain intact through next year's presidential elections despite all the talks of party realignment.

Japan

¶5. (C) On Japan, a country with which Kim has strong connections and ties (he negotiated the 1965 normalization of relations), the former prime minister said that he told PM Abe this summer not to discuss whether he would visit the Yasukuni Shrine in order to defuse regional tensions and improve relations with the ROK and China. The Ambassador said that improved ROK-Japan relations were key to security and prosperity in the region and that if the two countries, along with the U.S., could have a truly strong relationship, the three countries could provide a security foundation for all of Asia. Kim predicted that Abe would not go to Yasukuni and said the new Japanese prime minister would rely on his cabinet members to make both conservative and progressive statements while he toed the center.

Old Boys Summit

¶6. (C) Kim described an "Old Boys Summit" he would attend in March, 2007 that would include former leaders from Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Philippines and Japan. Former Japanese PM Nakasone founded the group and Japan would host the first summit next year in Fukuoka, where Kim would give the keynote address. The former leaders will convene annually to discuss solutions to various issues facing Asia.

Comment

¶7. (C) Kim Jong-pil is the only one of the "Three Kims" who did not become president of South Korea. The closest aide to Park Chung-hee, JP, as he is widely known, was at the center of South Korean politics and government over the past several decades. However, his influence is very marginal now, and his former title of "King-maker," because he largely controlled the central Chungcheong region, is no longer valid, despite his claims.

VERSHBOW